

# Cuba Then Halts Trips For Night

Delays Caused  
By Havana Check  
Of Ransom Goods

From News Dispatches

MIAMI, Fla., Dec. 23  
Freed prisoners of the Cuban invasion streamed into Florida tonight for a joyous reunion with their loved ones, but by midnight Operation Ransom appeared to have ground to a halt.

Officials were frankly puzzled at the cutoff of the prisoner flow after four freedom flights had deposited more than 400 men on Florida soil. At least three planes refused immediately and took off for Cuba and another load from the total of 1,113 Bay of Pigs invasion prisoners held in Castro jails.

Pan American World Air

Fidel Castro, in jovial mood, greets ransom ship in Havana and declares 24-hour "state of peace" with U. S. Page A4.

Defense of Soviet spy Rudolph Abel placed attorney James B. Donovan in U. S. spotlight first time. Page A6.

"We are all drinking French champagne," a prisoner's mother in Havana tells a reporter. Page A6.

Days officials, supplying the planes, had planned to continue the operation until all were brought to Miami to night.

But unconfirmed reports from Havana indicated that Premier Fidel Castro would delay a resumption of the airlift until morning. Latest estimates were that the rescue operation would not be completed until noon or possibly later on Monday.

Earlier today, after an agonizing 9-hour delay in the timetable, four freedom flight DC6s landed in Florida within three hours, bringing 426 prisoners to tensely emotional reunions with families they had not seen for 20 months.

The delay was caused by Castro's insistence that the African Pilot, the ship carrying part of the \$53 million in medicines and food for the exchange, arrive in Havana first.

Once it arrived, about 2 p. m., items on board had to be checked. This added to the delay.

The first flight landed in Florida at 6:05 p. m., with 108 former captives of Castro's regime. The second landed at 7 p. m., with 106; the third at 7:28 with 108 and the fourth at 8:55 with 104.

Hundreds more waited at San Antonio de los Baños military airport, 25 miles southwest of Havana, for their turn in the exchange worked out by New York lawyer James B. Donovan.

The brilliant winter sun was setting as the doors of the first big DC6 opened at the Florida base and the prisoners walked slowly down the ramp, each waving his hand at the small group on hand to greet them.

More than 200 newspaper and television people were at the base, along with a scattering of others, including leaders of the Cuban Families Committee whose long efforts to free the men finally were crowned with success. Author-

ities had taken precautions to limit the crowd strictly at the base.

Slowly, then faster, they came down the ramp—the men who had known the heartbreak of defeat of their liberation mission in Cuba 20 months ago, who had lived through bitter humiliations heaped on them by their captors, who had known the despair of 30-year prison sentences and the hopeless miseries of life in a prison crowded with political captives.

It was a scene laden with emotion. Some of the liberated men charged impatiently down the ramp, two steps at a time, and onto the floodlit strip, laughing for sheer joy.

A mustached young man pushed away the arm proffered by a Red Cross girl, and, grinning broadly, fairly skipped through the roped off lane from the plane and into a bus waiting to take the arrivals to the processing center. Some stopped to shake hands with acquaintances, including their wounded companions who were exchanged on credit early in the year.

A long caravan of cars and motorcycles preceded the first bus as it pulled away with the original arrivals but the former prisoners, laughing and waving in the weird glow of lights piercing the darkness, looked clean shaven although underweight.

Pretty hostesses and Cuban exile leaders embraced them as they boarded the buses. The laughing men obviously were fighting to hold back tears of happiness.

They were choked with emotion as father met son, comrade embraced comrade and men in their 50s wrapped their arms around boys in their teens.

"Viva los Estados Unidos! Viva Kennedy!" one shouted. "We are not here because of what we did," yelled another. "We are here thanks to the people of the United States."

One of the released prisoners made a "V" for victory in the World War II gesture made famous by Winston Churchill.

"Thank your President Kennedy," he called. "Long live free Cuba."

As the last bus pulled away with the balance of the first plane load of prisoners, one reporter asked Cuban exile leader Jose Miro Cardona, "Was your son among them?"

Miro's voice was a throaty whisper.

"What do you mean?" he asked proudly. "They are all my sons."

As he said it, the first passenger plane was wheeling out on the field to take off for Cuba again to bring out another load of prisoners.

Despite the sometimes tattered appearance of the arrivals, friends and officials said that on the whole the men "looked much better at first sight than we had anticipated."

When the first plane landed, some of the officials charged through the rope barricade to embrace the released men. But the remainder of those on the scene contained themselves and the prisoners had no difficulty reaching the buses. Occasionally one would break loose from the escort

side to shake hands with or embrace a friend.

"How do you feel?" an official shouted.

"Bien, chico, bien!" In other words, Fine, buddy, fine.

The first group did not include three high-ranking leaders of the ill-fated Brigade 2506—Jose San Roman, Manuel Artime and Eneito Oliva—on each of whose heads Castro had personally placed a \$500,000 ransom demand. Also absent from the first contingent were the sons of Miro and another exile chief, Manuel A. Varona.

One of the immigration hostesses, Maria Louisa Bolivar of Puerto Rico, was the first to go into the plane.

Inside she gave a brief welcoming speech in Spanish and received loud applause from the prisoners.

She told them that she was welcoming them again into this country in the name of the people of the United States.

By the time the third plane landed, the first group sat down to their first hot meal in the United States—vegetable soup, roast beef, mashed potatoes, gravy and buttered peas. It was served on gleaming white tablecloths by hostesses.

Among the fourth group was Orlando Cuervo Rubio, son of a former Cuban Secretary of Health on whose head Castro's military tribunal put a \$100,000 price tag for his freedom.

The third load contained two Roman Catholic priests identified as Father Lugo and Father de las Heras, who had jumped as paratrooper chaplains for the Brigade. The Cuban tribunal had sentenced each of them to 30 years in jail, but what was worse, forbade them from conducting a daily Mass, a forced denial of the oath they took as priests. Each was wearing lay clothes like the other prisoners.

Three of the passengers on the fourth plane were ill, and were taken to nearby hospitals. Two were stretcher cases; one had swollen feet and the other a paralyzed leg.

As swiftly as they could be taken to the receiving center for a hot bath and meal, the prisoners dressed in clean, fresh khakis that had been provided for them.

Their clothes seemed clean and, in most cases, quite new," one official declared. "But they just seemed to want to get rid of anything from Cuba."

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Christmas  
Served Noon



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Choice of Appetize  
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